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Case Study

AYURVEDIC MANAGEMENT OF ALOPECIA AREATA

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ABSTRACT

Alopecia areata is an autoimmune disease condition characterized by patchy, non-scarring hair loss due to immune-mediated damage to hair follicles. It commonly affects the scalp, beard, and moustache areas, with exclamatory hairs often visible at the lesion margins. The condition usually manifests between the second and fourth decades of life and is influenced by genetic, environmental, and psychological factors. In Ayurveda, alopecia areata is correlated with *Indralupta* explained under *Kapalagata Roga* by *Acharya Vagbhata* and *Kshudra Roga* by Acharya *Sushruta*. *Indraluptha* is occurs due to the vitiation of *Vata* and *Pitta doshas* in the hair root (*Romakoopa)*, leading to hair fall, followed by *Kapha* and *Rakta doshas* obstructing regrowth*. Prachana*, a type of *Raktamokshana* (bloodletting), is considered the first line of treatment. In this case study, a 20-year-old male with Alopecia areata was successfully treated with Ayurvedic *Shodhana* (purificatory) and *Shamana* (pacifying) therapy. Complete hair regrowth and symptom relief without recurrence were the outcomes of the treatment. This result emphasizes how Ayurvedic treatments can provide a comprehensive and long-lasting strategy for treating alopecia areata by addressing its underlying causes and reestablishing systemic equilibrium.

INTRODUCTION

Alopecia Areata (AA) is a chronic, autoimmune disorder characterized by localized, non-scarring hair loss, predominantly affecting the scalp but potentially involving any hair-bearing area of the body.[1] It affects approximately 2% of the global population and about 0.7% in India. The condition can affect individuals irrespective of age, gender, or ethnicity, often leading to significant psychological distress due to its unpredictable course and visible manifestation[2]. The pathogenesis of AA involves a complex interplay of genetic, environmental, and immunological factors. Central to its mechanism is a T-cell-mediated type IV hypersensitivity reaction, where the immune system targets anagen hair follicles. Various triggers such as psychological stress, infections, and genetic susceptibility contribute to disease onset and progression[3]. Modern medical treatments, including topical and systemic corticosteroids, immunotherapy, and minoxidil, offer symptomatic relief but are often associated with recurrence and limited long-term efficacy. Several studies have explored the immunological basis of AA, emphasizing its autoimmune nature and the role of cytokines and immune cells in follicular damage. However, despite advancements in immunomodulatory therapy, there remains a gap in achieving sustained remission, which necessitates exploration of alternative and holistic approaches. In Ayurvedic science, AA is closely correlated with *Indralupta,* as described in classical texts. The *Samprapti* involves vitiation of *Pitta* and *Vata doshas* in the *Romakoopa* (hair follicles), leading to hair fall, with secondary involvement of *Kapha* and *Rakta doshas* that inhibit regrowth[4]. The primary treatment advocated is *Raktamokshana* (bloodletting), followed by external applications *(Lepanas)* to restore follicular health and promote regrowth.[5]

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Case study

Presenting complaint: Patchy hair loss on the posterior scalp for 1 month.

History of presenting complaint

The patient noticed a small, round, smooth patch of hair loss on the vertex region of the scalp about one month ago. The patch gradually increased in size over two weeks. The affected area is:

- Non-itchy
- Non-painful
- Not associated with redness, scaling, oozing, or inflammation
- No previous history of similar hair loss was reported.

Past Medical and Surgical History

- No history of systemic illness (e.g., diabetes, thyroid disorders, autoimmune disease).
- No surgical history

Personal History

- Diet: Irregular food habits
- Appetite: Normal
- Bowel habits: Normal
- Sleep: Disturbed due to academic stress
- Addictions: None

Family History

No family history of autoimmune, dermatological, or thyroid disorders.

Allergic History

No known drug or food allergies

General Examination

Vital Signs: Within normal limits

Pallor, Icterus, cyanosis, Clubbing: Absent

Lymphadenopathy: Not detected

Local Examination (Scalp)

- One or more round, smooth, clearly demarcated patches of hair loss on the occipital area
- Size: 6 cm diameter
- No erythema, scaling, discharge, or scarring
- Hair pull test: positive at the periphery
- Exclamatory hairs: present

Blood investigation

- Hb- 14.5gm%
- ESR - 9mm at 1 hr
- TWBC- 7440 cells/cmm
- FBS - 91 mg%
- TRBC- 4.5 million/cmm
- T. Cholesterol - 165 mg%
- T. Platelet count- 2.93 per
- microliter Ca - 9.2 mg%
- AEC - 500 cells/cmm
- TSH- 1.03 milli IU/l
- BT - 3min 10 sec
- CT - 7min 0.02 sec
- HIV Test- Negative
- HBsAg- Negative
- VDRL- Negative
- HCV- Negative

Samprapthi katakas

- *Dosha: Vatha, Pitha, Kapha*
- *Dushya: Rasa, Raktha* and *Asthi*
- *Agni: Vishamagni*
- *Srothas: Annavaha, Rasavaha, Rakthavaha* and *Asthivaha*
- *Srothodushti: Sangha*
- *Adhishtana: Shira kapala*
- *Sadhyasadyatha: Sadhya*

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Table 1: Internal medicines

S.No	Drug	Dose	Duration
1	*Vaiswanara choornam*	1 tsp twice daily with hot water before food	0-7
2	*Avipathi choornam*	1 tsp with hot water at bed time	0-7 days
3	*Krimigna vati*	1-0-1 after food	0-7 days
4	*Rajanyadi choorna*	1 tsp twice daily with honey after food	0-7 days

Table 2: Procedures

S.No	Procedure	Medicine used	Duration
1	*Snehapana*	Cow's ghee	8-10 day
2	*Abhynga* and *Ushnambu Snana*	*Eladi keram*	11th day
3	*Virechana*	*Gandravahastha eranda thailam* + Milk + *Thiphala kashyam*	12th day
4	*Peyadi kramam*		13-14th day
5	*Prachana*	With insulin needle	On 15th day, 21th day and 28th day
6	*Shiropichu*	*Malathyadi tailam*	Daily from 15th to 28th day

Figure 1: 0th day of treatment

Figure 2: 21th day of treatment

Figure 3: 28th day of treatment

RESULTS

After the treatment

- Healthy hair growth was observed in the previously patchy area.
- The regrown hair appears normal in texture and pigmentation.
- No new patches have developed.
- No side effects or complications noted during the course of treatment.

DISCUSSION

In this case of *Indralupta*, there is involvement of *Tridosha* along with *Rakta*. Genetic, environmental, and stress-related factors caused the derangement of doshas along with an imbalance of *Agni*. This led to the improper development of *Dhatus*, especially *Asthi Dhatu,* as *Kesha* (hair) is considered the *Upadhatu* of *Asthi*. Therefore, treatment was planned based on the principles of *Agni Vardhana*, *Srotoshodhana*, and *Dosha Shamana*, which form the core of *Indralupta Chikitsa*.In this study, *Deepana–Pachana oushadhis* were administered first, followed by *Shodhana oushadhis.* After internal purification*, Rakta Shodhana* was carried out, and then external applications of medicines were given.

Internal Medications

***Vaiswanara Choorna*:** The word *Vaiswanara* means *Agni* (fire). All the ingredients in this formulation are *Agni Vardhaka* and mild laxatives. In the initial stage, it helps in *Pachana* of *Doshas* and *Agni Deepana*[6].

***Avipathi Choorna*:** Given at night for 7 days, it possesses *Deepana–Pachana* properties essential for *Dosha Shodhana,* especially in conditions involving *Tridosha* vitiation.[7]

***Krimighna Vati*:** In this condition, there is *Srotodushti (sanga* or blockage of channels), so *Srotoshodhana* is essential. The ingredients support *Agni Deepana* and *Dhatu Poshana* (nourishment of tissues).

***Rajanyadi Choorna*:** This formulation has *Deepana* properties and also acts as an immunity booster. Since autoimmune dysfunction is a primary cause of alopecia areata, this medicine was particularly effective in this condition.[8]

Procedures

After *Deepana–Pachana, Shodhana* procedures were performed. As *Purva Karma, Snehana* (oleation) and *Swedana* (sudation) were done to facilitate *Dosha Vilayana* (liquefaction of *Doshas*). *Virechana* was then administered using *Gandharvahastadi Eranda Taila* with milk and *Triphala Kashayam.* This combination possesses *Sookshma Guna* and *Shroto Shodhana* properties, helping it enter the minute channels and purify them.

Prachana Karma (a form of *Raktamokshana)* was performed in three sittings. Since *Rakta Dushti* is a significant factor in *Indralupta,* localized bloodletting helped remove vitiated blood from the site and nourished *Rakta Dhatu,* acting as a localized *Shodhana* therapy.

Shiropichu with *Malathyadi Taila* was applied continuously for 14 days. *Shiropichu*, one among the *Murdhni Taila* therapies, is indicated for *Kesha shathana* (hair fall). *Malathyadi Taila*, specifically indicated in *Indralupta*, was used due to its *Tikshna* and *Ushna* properties, which help alleviate *Kapha dosha* at the hair follicles (*Roopakupa).* Its *Sookshma Guna* supports *Srotoshodhana*, and the *Taila* (oil) form also helps pacify *Vata dosha. Shiropichu* improves local blood circulation, thus enhancing the nutrition of the scalp and hair roots, promoting healthy hair regrowth.[9]

CONCLUSION

This case of *Indralupta* was successfully treated using Ayurvedic protocols underlines the *Agni Deepana, Dosha Shamana*, and *Srotoshodhana*. Internal medications helped correct metabolic imbalances, while *Virechana* and *Prachana* eliminated vitiated *Doshas* and *Rakta. Shiropichu* with *Malathyadi Taila* nourished the scalp and stimulated healthy hair regrowth. The case emphasizes the importance of a systematic, and extensive Ayurvedic approach in managing autoimmune conditions like alopecia areata, offering both symptomatic relief and long-term restoration.

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